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MONUMENTALISM: SCULPTURAL MEANS OF INTERWAR POLITICAL REPRESENTATION IN HUNGARY

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Abstract

At the time of political realignment after the Great War, the representational strategies of newly born states also changed. Due to its geopolitical status, Hungary as a receiver state in a political and cultural sense intentionally turned to Italy as a reference from the 1920s both in political and aesthetic matters. As a result, Tibor Gerevich, one of the most notable figures of cultural politics during the Horthy regime, endeavored to create a new Hungarian art relying on contemporary Italian tendencies. During their scholarships, the artists of the 'Roman School,' inspired by artifacts of previous eras, forged a new style for the modern visual representation of the Hungarian Catholic Church and the state. Sculpture, which in many ways is more vulnerable to authoritarian systems than other forms of art, can plastically reveal the self-image of a regime. This might help to answer the following question: Why did Hungary fail to establish a truly modern form of political representation, compared to Italy?

INTRODUCTION

Hungary's development of the sculpture of political representation between the two World Wars is closely associated with the millennial anniversary of the founding of the Hungarian state, the Great War, and the consequences of the latter's conclusion for Hungary, in particular the territorial reduction that resulted from the Treaty of Trianon. The monuments that are linked to these events operate with 'traditional' symbols that the establishment could easily adapt for its goals of legitimation, and to illustrate its aspirations in foreign and domestic policy. However, questions of how and why specific symbols were preferred are related to the orientation of Hungary's foreign policy, and even though the source of influence is not exclusive, its significance justifies closer analysis.

Even if one knows barely about the history of Hungary at the time, observing public space reveals an unusual feature that correctly illustrates Hungarian history during this period. The unfortunate historical events predetermined the topics of public sculpture, and the power necessarily turned to the glorious moments and persons of Hungarian history. The members of the political establishment after the Great War and of the short-lived Hungarian

Soviet Republic had started their lives and careers in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, and thus unsurprisingly had ties to the aesthetics of political representation of the Habsburg era, including suspicion toward any modernist and avant-garde approaches that openly opposed the *ancien régime.* Therefore, their hesitant practices of representation became eclectic, and, at least in the beginning, stylistically incoherent. In the following, I will discuss how this hesitant political representation in sculpture unfolded, and what events and ideas prevented the consolidation of a coherent aesthetic perspective and its realization in public space.

MILLENNIAL FESTIVITIES AND THE GREAT WAR: PRELUDE TO SCULPTURAL INTERWAR POLITICAL REPRESENTATION

In 1896, millennium festivities took place across the Hungarian Kingdom celebrating the conquest and acquisition of land in 896 – the historical origin of the presence of Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin. The nationwide celebration witnessed not only numerous exhibitions, concerts, and, in a ritualistic sense, different occasions of gatherings, but also newly erected monuments that referred to the ancient Hungarians and the continuity between the conquerors and their heirs of the time. The most iconic among these architectural and sculptural artifacts is the one built on the Square of Heroes in the heart of Budapest, though it was finalized only in 1906. It is worth consideration as a millennial monument because it contains nearly all the main elements that provide an iconographic basis for the monuments to forthcoming events and political regimes: the ancient Hungarian chieftains of the seven tribes, the state founder St. Stephen, and all the significant kings and persons that a political system would proudly refer to as means of legitimacy. Naturally, the widely spread iconography visualized on the monuments to the millennium resulted in a fixed concept for the "institutionalized remembrance" that appeared not long after the outbreak of World War I and manifested in different types of statues that can be grouped by their figures.[1] Before getting to World War I monuments – which, though they started to appear before the war's end in 1918, only proliferated in significant quantities all across the country after 1920 – it is important to mention the short-lived Hungarian Soviet Republic and its attitude towards the already-existing monuments from the Habsburg era and its political representation in the public space. During its existence between March 21 and August 1, 1919, the socialist state intended to radically break not just with the previous political establishment, but with the existing artistic canons as well. From our point of view, the most spectacular gesture

1 Örs Somfay, "Az I. világháború magyar vonatkozású köztéri, valamint közösségi hősi emlékei és ezek adatbázisa" [World War I Hungarian-related Public Art and Community Memories of the Heroic, and Their Database] (PhD diss., Pázmány Péter Catholic University, 2014), 117.

that captures this discontinuity happened during the festivities of International Workers' Day on May 1st: The state covered the statues and monuments of the preceding regime with red shrouds, including the above-mentioned millennial monument, and applied different Communist slogans, symbols and insignias to them.[2] The iconography of the memorials for the Hungarian Revolution of 1848 and of the millennial monuments anticipate the iconography of World War I memorials; this iconography was expanded with further innovations after 1920.[3] The prewar iconography included hussars and significant politicians who achieved partial independence from the Habsburg dynasty, which resulted in the dualist system of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy after the Compromise of 1867. Iconography after the war, however, involved not only these figures, but also some ancient symbols and attributes from the pre-Christian history of Hungarians. This iconographic concept of the World War I memorials unfolded according to the symbolic structure of the developing *civil religion*, whose complex elements connected significant figures from the past to the heroes of the present, and lifted earthly events to mythical altitudes.[4] The idea that wartime sufferings were legitimated as a result of divine chosenness and as an ordeal from God appears on memorials using symbols from the salvation history and the cult of the Virgin Mary. The figure holding the fallen soldier on the Pietà-compositions can appear as the Virgin Mary with the Hungarian Holy Crown, as the *Patrona Hungariæ*, a pagan foremother from the time of the Carpathian Basin's conquest, or as another soldier – and we also see combinations of these types.

About twenty years after the millennial festivities, totemistic ancestors and historical figures from pre-Christian times began to be highlighted on monuments in order to strengthen the construction of a national self-image, and to connect it with the Hungarian nation's origins. This group's most common elements are the *turul,* a mythical bird more or less similar to a hawk or falcon; the obscure attribute of the Hunnic-Hungarian origin myth, the *Sword of God,* which was Attila the Hun's legendary weapon, said to render its bearer invincible; and the great figures of Hungarian prehistory. These conquering leaders, chieftains, and their descendants are given prominent roles on World War I memorials, which depict the archetypes of Hungarian martial virtue in later ages, so that the connection between the fallen soldiers and the Hungarian past becomes evident. In this context, the pagan antecedents, similar to the Virgin Mary, appear as protectors of the Hungarian nation,

2 Emese Révész, "A múltat végképp eltörölni" [May the Past Be Swallowed Up at Last], *Artmagazin*, no. 56. (2013): 8–11.

3 Miklós Szabó, "A magyar történeti mitológia az első világháborús emlékműveken" [Hungarian Historical Mythology on the Monuments of the First World War], in *Monumentumok az első háborúból*, eds. Ákos Kovács, and Néray Katalin (Budapest: Népművelési Intézet – Műcsarnok, 1985), 56–73.

4 Elemér Hankiss, "Nemzetvallás" [Civil Religion], in *Monumentumok az első háborúból*, eds. Kovács, Katalin, 36–48.

although their identification is not always an easy task. Of course, the ancient heroes and canonized saints who destroyed their enemies, such as Hercules or Saint George, could not be left out of the World War I monuments' allegories, but going beyond the war memorials, they should also be seen as more serious references for the representation of power.

AFFINITIES AND CHOICES OF THE CULTURAL POLICY IN THE HORTHY REGIME: TIBOR GEREVICH AND THE BIRTH OF THE 'ROMAN SCHOOL'

The period after the Great War and the short-lived Hungarian Soviet Republic, from 1920 until 1944, was named after the regent, and thus the supreme political dignitary of the state, Miklós Horthy de Nagybánya. The state, which had been shrunk to one-third of its former territory and was severely deprived of both material and intellectual resources, witnessed a collapse in its room for maneuvering in foreign policy. For Count Kunó Klebelsberg, one of the most decisive cultural politicians of the Horthy era, escape from isolation could be achieved through a revival of Hungary's scientific and cultural life. From our point of view, his most important accomplishment was the reopening of Hungarian cultural institutes abroad and the establishment of new ones, with which he intended to emphasize Hungary's cultural supremacy in the region. However, it also served to support the governing power's stability by providing elite domestic training and the construction of a useful system of relations for territorial revisionist efforts. The reacquisition of the Collegium Hungaricum in Rome by the Hungarian state was brought about by the art historian Tibor Gerevich (1882–1954), who, thanks to his extensive Italian connections, rhetorical skill, and diplomatic abilities, became a key figure in the deepening of relations between the two countries.[5]

Gerevich's claim for the creation of modern Hungarian art can be approached through the synthesis of ancient, medieval, and Renaissance traditions, as well as a form of realism that avoids details, and the adaptable achievements of the avant-garde, which had often been the subject of sharp criticism.[6] His intention of renewing ecclesiastical art can already be detected in his early programmatic statements, which in fact even then meant reforming the entirety of Hungarian art. He criticized Impressionism for its materiality, omission of content, and analytical approach, among other things, and he expected Hungarian art to give birth to a "calm monumentality expressing inner experiences."[7] It is important to emphasize that Gerevich's critique of Impressionism – and the avant-garde

5 See also Gábor Ujváry, *A harmincharmadik nemzedék* [The Thirty-Third Generation] (Budapest: Ráció Kiadó, 2010).

6 See Julianna P. Szűcs, *A római iskola* [The Roman School] (Budapest: Corvina Kiadó, 1987).

7 Tibor Gerevich, "Egyházművészetünk jövője" [The Future of Our Ecclesiastical Art], *Magyar Iparművészet*, no. 1 (1920): 27–31.

more generally – was not merely aesthetic in nature. For him, these artistic tendencies were also the embodiment of the regime's ideological opponents due to the cosmopolitanism and Leftism of the artists and their supporters. At the same time, he acknowledged and praised the anti-academic aspirations and innovations of the avant-garde because he believed that their radicalism was a necessary condition for the renewal of art, which in his opinion had first been realized in Mussolini's Italy.[8] It must be also highlighted that Gerevich's visions would have been ignored if Klebelsberg, despite his admittedly old-fashioned taste in arts, had not respected Gerevich's authority of knowledge and proficiency regarding questions of art, and supported him in realizing his ideas. However, from the 1930s forward the state increasingly reduced the budget of foreign academies partly due to the global economic crisis, while structural changes also took place. Klebelsberg dismissed Gerevich from his directorial duties in 1930 to be able to focus on his curatorial position, but after Klebelsberg died in 1932, the new Minister of Religion and Education, Bálint Hóman terminated the curatorship of the academies in 1935. Despite these structural changes and limited financial means, Gerevich's authority remained intact and he was able to continue his art-organizing activities.[9] In his plans for the founding of his school, Rome played the role that Munich or Paris did in the 19th century among Hungarian artists who wished to study abroad. The first artists who received a scholarship in 1928 went to Rome by invitation or on the recommendation of their masters. There were no exact methods to determine how the scholarships were awarded: Whether the apprentices applied or their masters recommended them, Gerevich alone made the decision in the end. There were certainly some exceptional instances in the selection process as well, for example in the case of the painter Pál C. Molnár. The young artist applied for an exhibition dedicated to St. Francis of Assisi but the jury ruled out his painting and deposited it with other artworks. Gerevich, as director of the Collegium Hungaricum in Rome and also as government commissioner and holder of different political and cultural titles, asked the jury to show him the rejected artworks, as a result of which he retrieved Molnár's painting and invited him to join the first group of scholarship recipients.

Initially, there were four sculptors: Dezső Erdey, Ernő Jálics, Lívia Kuzmik, and Pál Pátzay. Their art was deeply rooted in antiquity and in the most influential classicist sculptor of the 19th century, Adolf von Hildebrand, and his perception of relationship between architecture and sculpture.[10] During the following years, further artists in the scholarship program, as well as others

8 Tibor Gerevich, "A modern olasz művészet" [Modern Italian Art], *Magyar Szemle*, no. 5–8 (1929): 236–243.

9 Gábor Ujváry, "Amikor a kultúra a politika fölé kerekedett…" [When Culture Took Over Politics…], *Európai Utas*, no. 19. (2008): 74–82.

10 Adolf von Hildebrand, *Das Problem der Form in der Bildenden Kunst* [The Problem of Form in Painting and Sculpture] (Straßburg, 1893).

outside of the program but still connected to Gerevich and the 'Roman School', contributed to the wide range of sculptural approaches which will be discussed in the following section. These undoubtedly talented artists each represented different trends, which suggests that Gerevich also sought pluralism in addition to creating a unified artistic direction. The heterogeneous approaches of the artists can be viewed from various perspectives. They individually differed in their aesthetic tastes and choices of references, and their susceptibility to applying techniques of historical styles could be described as almost accidental. Accordingly, Gerevich could send these talented artists to Rome to let them improve in their own way to fulfill the upcoming tasks that awaited them. Depending on the surrounding environment, a sculptor interested and trained in, for instance, the gothic style could accomplish works in a stylistically similar milieu. Putting aside this practical point of view, perhaps a more important interpretation comes into sight. Because of recent historical events and the geopolitical status of Hungary – isolation in foreign politics, revisionist efforts, the will to demonstrate intellectual supremacy in the region, etc. – the state aimed to demonstrate the country's commitment to the West, on which it counted for recognition of the legitimacy of its revisionist efforts. The claim that contemporary Hungary was the true heir of antiquity (Pannonia in the Roman Empire), the political and military power of medieval times (the kings of the Árpád dynasty) and the erudition of Renaissance (King Matthias Corvinus and his Venetian connections) was supported by adopting historical styles in modern art, which could be interpreted as a form of strategic pluralism by choice.

SCULPTURE OF THE 'ROMAN SCHOOL'

To reveal the essence of the idea above discussed and illustrate its claims in practice, it is important to present the sculpture of the 'Roman School' through the artists and some of their significant works. Perhaps one of the most iconic pieces of the 'Roman School', and definitely Pátzay's most famous statue, is his *Monument to the 10th Hussar Regiment* (**fig. 1**) that was erected in Székesfehérvár in 1939.[11] The contemporary press praised both its vigorous and naturalistic depiction of an "idealized type of horse of a certain breed" and the way the naked hero dissolves the right angle between the animal and himself with his right arm swinging backward.[12] Abandoning certain details (e.g. horse tack), the artist rather emphasizes large surfaces and shapes. The horse's steady gallop and its disciplined, dynamic bearing of the rider together strengthen the statue's monumentality and the sacredness of the occupied space. The freshness of this conception of sculpture and its spatial and urbanistic aspects are also an exemplary fulfillment of the task of the 'Roman School' in mobilizing society. In

11 The 10th Imperial and Royal Hussar Regiment existed between 1741–1918. The officers and three squadrons of the regiment comprised a formation known as the Hussars of Fehérvár.

12 Ervin Ybl, "Pátzay Pál művészete" [Art of Pál, Pátzay], *Szépművészet*, no. 7 (1942): 169–174.

Fig. 1. Pál Pátzay, *Monument to the 10th Hussar Regiment*, 1939, Székesfehérvár, © Department of Sculptures and Medals, Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest.

this respect, Pátzay states: "… a monument depicting an ideal image of society or an idea that moves societies can only be displayed using the large-scale tempers and proportions of monumentality. Of course, it also requires an architecturally assigned placement worthy of its significance. Without a sense of elevated fervor, there is no monumentality. The pathos leads to a synthetic vision, as well as the form which is created out of the grasp of the essential to a large-scale simplicity."[13]

Under the influence of his master István Szentgyörgyi, Dezső Erdey, who is considered a conservative among the artists of the 'Roman School', started his career on the path of Hildebrand's classicism and then gained inspiration by turning to antiquity and the Renaissance during his stay in Italy. Among his public works, the plans for tombs and wells are particularly important in his oeuvre, underlining the importance of his already characteristic architectural approach. Similarly, Erdey's friend, Ernő Jálics, turned to the Gothic style after his stay in Italy. Although he produced his first significant sculpture, the *Monument to the 44th Infantry Regiment,* in 1932,[14] after his Roman scholarship, the ancient theme of Hercules and the lion of Nemea, and its style show the artist's ability to adapt to the demands of his clients.[15] The artist created his slender, suggestive ecclesiastical works of art based on the forms of Gothic sculptures (*Gothic*, 1930s; *St. Rita*, ca. 1938; **fig. 2**), but if, for example, the Neo-Renaissance environment of the Basilica of St. Stephen required adaptation, he turned to his experience in Italy for inspiration in the making of the relief of the *Coronation of St. Stephen* (1938).

13 Pál Pátzay, *Alkotás és szemlélet* [Creation and Approach] (Budapest: Magvető Könyvkiadó, 1967), 90, translation by author.

14 The 44th Infantry Regiment existed between 1744 and 1918. Somogy County and a part of Tolna County belonged to them, and from 1860 one of the regiment's battalions formed the garrison of Kaposvár. Ernő Jálics fought as a reserve lieutenant of the regiment in World War I.

15 The figure of Hercules, who is struggling with the lion of Nemea, was modeled after the wrestler József Sugár, but according to other sources, circus wrestler Zsigmond Czája was the model.

Fig. 2. Ernő Jálics, *Gothic*, 1930s, © Department of Sculptures and Medals, Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest.

If Pátzay represents the classicizing sculptors of the 'Roman School', Béla Ohmann was the most widely-employed sculptor of the archaizing artists. However, he is in many ways the odd one out. First of all, he was not a recipient of the Roman scholarship; he could not have been due to his age and because, at the time of the first class, Ohmann was already an accomplished sculptor in the Neo-Baroque and eclectic styles. Nevertheless – or perhaps precisely because he had a few years of extra experience – he was one of the busiest artists in Gerevich's course, and he was able to master and apply what he saw during his German, French, and Italian study tours in the 1920s. The fact that Ohmann was not a recipient of the Roman scholarship, yet exhibited regularly with artists of the 'Roman School' at international exhibitions (e.g. at the Venice Biennales in 1940 and 1942, and the world exposition in Paris in 1937) and was frequently employed as a sculptor on important constructions of the time, justifies describing him as a significant artist of the 'Roman School'. In addition, it is difficult to grasp a concrete direction in his art because the sculptures that can be attributed to him with certainty point in different directions due to the demands of the space and the intentions of his clients. Considering the chronology of his statues, we must conclude that from 1930 onwards the Neo-Baroque no longer haunted him, and the forms of the Romanesque and Gothic styles and the possibility of their renewal, as well as antiquity, became a starting point for his works.[16]

It is not a coincidence that at the beginning of the 'Roman School', painting received remarkably greater emphasis than sculpture. This shows, on the one hand, Gerevich's preference, and on the other suggests the needs of cultural policy at the time and the abilities of the artists who served it. According to this view, the possibility of renewing ecclesiastical art and mobilizing society was seen in mural painting, and not by chance: While the competition between the various trends and -isms in the international art scene had a fruitful effect on Hungarian painters, and certain innovations seemed applicable to the ecclesiastical and state orders, in terms of sculpture this rebirth was yet to come. Although fresh ideas also appeared in the works of the sculptors discussed above, in general, they were hardly able to break away from Hildebrand-esque classicization, with one or two exceptions. This was also due to the barrier represented by the public's rather conservative

16 László Prohászka, "Ohmann Béla életműve" [The Oeuvre of Béla Ohmann], *Új Forrás*, no. 7 (2008): 75–92.

Fig. 3. Zoltán Borbereki Kovács, *Navvy*, 1934, © Department of Sculptures and Medals, Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest.

taste. In this regard, it is a remarkable development that in the 1930–1931 class we can already find more sculptors among the artists whose art goes beyond the expected direction, such as in the case of the exceptional Tibor Vilt (*The Thinker*, 1936). Some of these artists boldly turned toward inspirations that later contradicted their earlier wishes. The following artists can be classified among the new generation of sculptors of the 'Roman School': András Dózsa-Farkas with his manner of large-scale neoclassicism (*Statue of the Hungarian Resurrection*, 1935); the Egyptianizing sculpture of László Mészáros (*Standing Worker*, circa 1930); János Pándi-Kiss, who started his career in Italy and worked there for fourteen years (*Construction*, 1940-42); and from the later scholarship recipients Károly Antal (*Coronation of St. Stephen*, 1938), Zoltán Borbereki-Kovács (*Shepherd Boy with Cow*, 1936), Jenő Grantner (*Science and Art*, 1939), József Ispánki (*St Stephen and Gisela*, 1938), and Jenő Kerényi (*Károly Markó the Elder*, 1941), who together represented the post-Gerevich era and broke away from a preference for smooth surfaces and classical themes in their art. The reasons for this change are mainly to be found in the organizational transformation of the Collegium Hungaricum in Rome: Tibor Gerevich was relieved of his position as director in 1930,[17] and then in 1936 as a curator, bringing the era to an end.[18] The criteria of the new generation of sculptors changed, thanks to their 'leaderlessness', the guidelines that were previously decisive in their art loosened, and other conceptions were added to their relatively uniform aspirations. In this change, theme and form interacted: The smoothness of the sculpture's surface was increasingly replaced by a shaping that emphasized materiality, which made it possible to amplify the social-critical connotations behind the increasingly frequent depictions of workers and peasants, as well as the masculine and raw illustration of the Hungarians' Turanian origins. The art of Zoltán Borbereki-Kovács offers a striking combination of these two trends. The painter who shortly thereafter became a sculptor dealt with social issues from the beginning, and almost involuntarily created "Hungarian types" in his works.[19] The *Navvy* (1934) appears before us as a strong worker who is ready for action, his block-like figure free from all solemnity, yet heroic (**fig. 3**). Borbereki worked with clear forms, and his composition is characterized

17 Béla Zsolt Szakács, "Gerevich Tibor (1882–1954)," *Enigma*, no. 47 (2006): 188.

18 Szűcs, *A római iskola*, 95.

19 László L. Menyhért, *Borbereki Kovács Zoltán* (Budapest: Képzőművészeti Kiadó, 1986), 11.

Fig. 4. Béla Ohmann, Árpád, 1938, © Department of Sculptures and Medals, Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest.

by a simple and natural tectonic approach, mostly reflected in his *Self-Portrait* made from artificial stone (ca. 1933), which can be also viewed as a contemporary sculptural example of the "ancient Hungarian phenotype."[20]

Although Béla Ohmann's statues of *Árpád* and *St. Stephen* (1938) in the Székesfehérvár town hall show a modern orchestration of early medieval features, in this case, we should emphasize the appearance of Turanian racial characteristics (**fig. 4**): robust facial structure, slit-cut eyes, rugged facial hair, and sometimes stylized Oriental ornamentation. This departure from the dominant themes and styles of the 1900s behind is not an isolated case, and above all, it is not accidental. Just as with the culmination of the results of the large-scale archaeological projects of the time, the St. Stephen's Memorial Year of 1938 was a caesura in the life of the 'Roman School' as well. As Julianna P. Szűcs argues, it can also be interpreted as the cessation of the complex concept of the 'Roman School' and the beginning of its disintegration.[21] In its expression of historical continuity, the sculptural idiom necessarily reached out toward the Romanesque – and more and more boldly toward the Byzantine – instances of foreshadowing which, combined with the display of the Hungarians' anthropological features, created a 'St. Stephen's style', differing from the previous 'Roman style'. Compared to the artists who received the Roman scholarship, the sculptors of the previous generation such as Béla Ohmann and Ferenc Sidló, who was eight years older, were able to adapt to the course's archaic and 'Turanizing' needs, armed with their academic qualifications and experiences of the 20th century's -isms.[22] Sidlós's equestrian statue of *St. Stephen* (1938) is a representative example of this endeavor, of which he stated: "I wanted to depict the ancient Hungarian St. Stephen with this work: the conqueror, the nation-builder, an immortal expression of strength and foresight."[23]

HUNGARIAN REFLECTIONS ON MODERN ITALIAN SCULPTURE

Although the rationale behind the Hungarian artists' apprenticeship in Rome was to create modern Hungarian art, which could be considered a political

20 Zoltán Vitéz Nagy, "Borbereki Kovács Zoltán," *Szépművészet*, no. 4. (1942): 85–87.

21 Szűcs, *A római iskola*, 110.

22 Both Béla Ohmann and Ferenc Sidló were disciples of Lajos Mátrai. Besides antiquity, the effect of Art Nouveau can be felt in both of their early works.

23 Ferenc Sidló, "Sidló Ferenc Szent István szobrát Hóman miniszterrel az élen elfogadta a szoborbizottság" [Ferenc Sidló's statue of St. Stephen was approved by the sculpture committee with Minister Hóman at the helm], *Az Est*, March 11, 1937, 3.

gesture, and even though Tibor Gerevich's aim behind the establishment of the scholarship was to follow Italian endeavors, if we look at the artworks produced in the program's first year, we find that they were inspired 'only' by artworks of the recent past. At that time, six years after the March on Rome, sculptural works that did not display the more or less successful results of Hildebrand-esque classicism or Impressionist experiments in imitation of Rodin likewise appeared as isolated phenomena in Italy. To put it more simply: Modernism in the representation of power in both Italy and Hungary had not yet arrived in the late 1920s. Gerevich's sharpest-eyed student, the art historian István Genthon, necessarily had to choose from the works of sculptors born around 1875 in his 1932 overview of modern Italian sculpture.[24] The sculptural designs of buildings (such as those of the Central Railway Station in Milan, which is at least as eclectic as it is grandiose) so far only bore witness to the blending of the extroverted decorativeness of late Art Nouveau with historical fragments. Myriad World War I memorials were still spreading across the country as classicist reminiscences of realistic military depictions and allegories at the time, and in the field of small sculptures in general, nothing could have been added to Genthon's article. The technique of Ermenegildo Luppi's *Visions of the Past* (1913) and *Without the Sun* (1914) is clearly impressionistic, and the Monument of Monte Berico in 1921 spoils the architectural foundation with its disproportionate masses; the lawyer Antonio Maraini, with his strict editing (*Motherhood*, 1920), his symmetrical compositions (*The Kiss*, 1921), his reliefs, and his one-sided works (*Family Portrait*, 1919) shows the influence of Hildebrand; and although Libero Andreotti was a French-educated sculptor, this influence was already nourished by the art of the generation after Rodin, as well as Bourdelle's heroism (*The Great Warrior*, 1898-1900; *Hercules the Archer*, 1909). The grace of Joseph Bernard's art (e.g. *Dressing Girl*, 1914) may have contributed to the success of Andreotti's art, which was otherwise deeply influenced by the Italian Renaissance (*Roncade Monument*, ca. 1922; *Saronno Monument*, 1923; *Cherry Picker*, 1919).

However, when the young generation of sculptors of the two countries had been commissioned for the first time by the state, municipalities, and the Roman Catholic Church, their paths separated, a process in which the two states' political systems and the differences between their centers of power and their consolidation played a major role. While the civil religion of Fascism was a *state religion* that was not moderated even by the Lateran Convention, and can be considered a tactical concordat rather than a serious declaration of religious commitment, Catholicism was a determining factor of the Horthy era in Hungary. In this way, the difference between the cultural policies of the two countries – the reference and the receiver – and the difference between

24 István Genthon, "Új olasz szobrászat" [The New Italian Sculpture], *Budapesti Szemle*, no. 658 (1932): 274–295.

their artistic products can be revealed. The veterans of World War I, including those assault squadrons called *arditi*, were of great importance in the myth of Fascist Italy's origins. It follows that the cult of heroism was not only for the memory of the fallen soldiers (as was the case in Hungary), but also appeared in the political narrative as an allegory for the birth of the new state. Belief in the state's omnipotence caused a significant proportion of the sculptural products to display a sacralized profane theme, a phenomenon that was only further reinforced by Futurism's combatant behavior, which was, in turn, elevated almost to the rank of state art: masculinity, strength, glorification of work, sports, the aesthetics of the human body, and optimism. In Hungary, on the other hand, the modern representation of power went in a completely different direction. Gerevich envisioned the new art school on the foundations of ecclesiastical art's renewal, and, strangely, Catholicism was more supportive of this than the state was in its own profane representation. While the works of Italian artists were thematically oriented towards the recent past – the Fascist takeover – the present, and even more so to the future, the majority of Hungarians presented to society the great historical figures of the past, saints, mementos of significant historical events, and tragedies. Instead of the vision of *what will be,* the rhetoric of *what had been* prevailed.

The Hungarian artists who arrived in Italy in the second half of the 1930s could see much more that was being realized in accordance with the ideas of Fascist architecture, as well as applied and monumental sculpture. However, their results could no longer be fully utilized in Hungary due to the thematic framework provided by the World Eucharistic Congress and the St. Stephen's Memorial Year of 1938, and then due to the outbreak of World War II. The profane theme according to which sculptural display was supported by Fascist Italy from the beginning, and which had served as a reference for Hungarian artists, would return only after 1945 in the works of the artists of the 'Roman School' and their disciples, who took advantage of their experiences in the previous regime in order to make use of them in socialist realism.

CONCLUSION

As we have seen, the tragic closure of the Great War for the Hungarian Kingdom, as well as the short-lived but shocking Communist dictatorship, evidently directed public sculpture toward the glorious past with an atmosphere of bittersweet nostalgia. This historical feature, combined with the rather conservative attitude of society toward the arts, hesitated to support a massive artistic direction in public space akin to that in Italy at the time – while the Roman Catholic Church seemed to be more progressive in its own representation – and fatally determined the destiny of aspirations such as those of the 'Roman School'. On one hand, the stylistic wayfinding of the 'Roman School' in the beginning was necessary, and the limited permissiveness of Gerevich could be interpreted as somewhat liberal thinking. On the other

hand, trying to match the possible stylistic choices in sculpture (Romanesque, Renaissance-like, etc.) with the rather modernist, but still homogenous architecture of the time made it impossible to shape public space in order to illustrate the characteristics of a regime with a determined aesthetic vision. Naturally, the global financial crisis and later World War II made it even harder to articulate any artistic visions in public space. Either way, in the vortex of history the Horthy regime failed to create an image of itself that would last as long as any political establishment would wish.